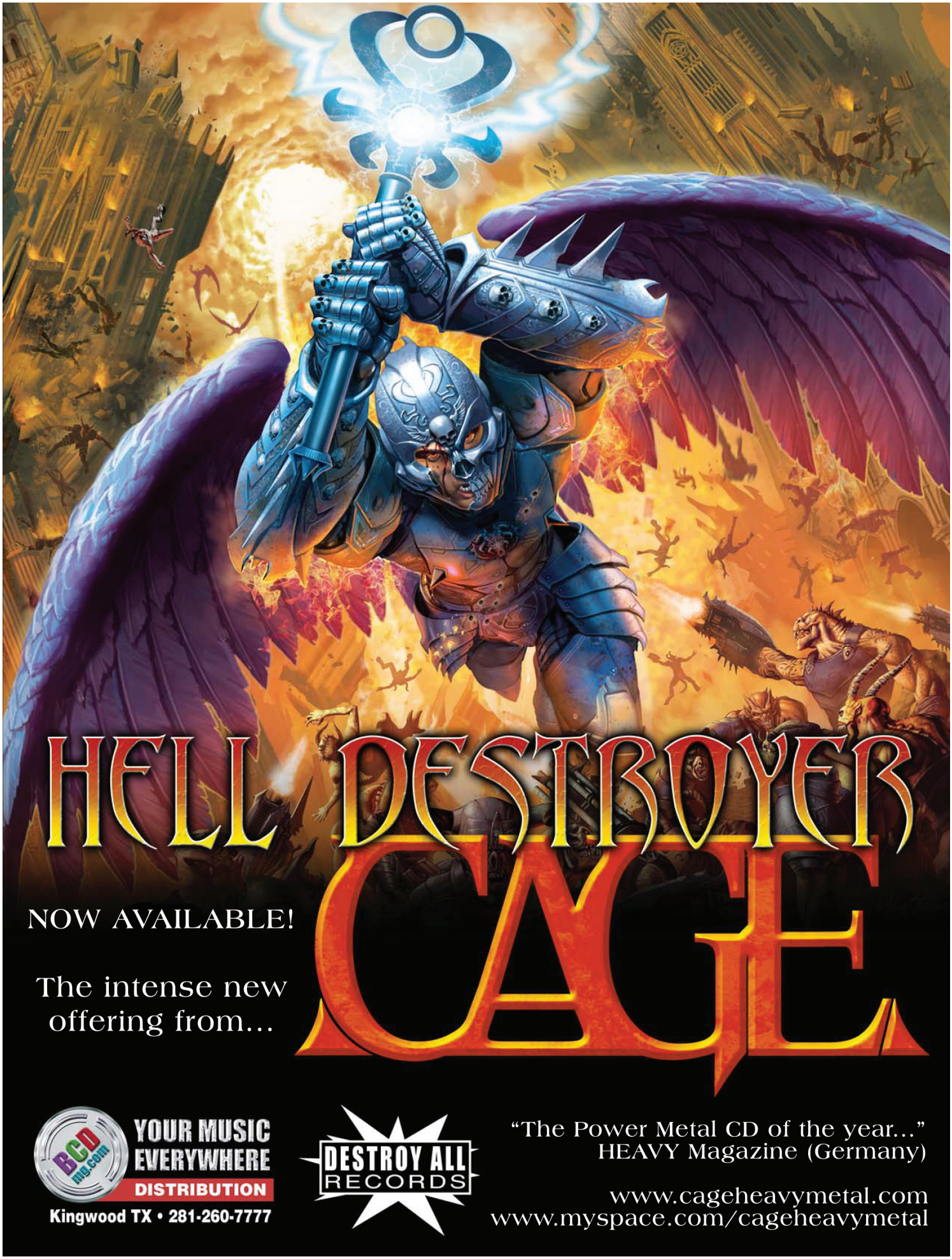
Feb/Mar 2008 Issue #73 $2.95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Issue #73
February/March 2008

HEAVEN'S METAL®

Diary of a Magazine

For the past year, I've been acting as the managing editor (we're all volunteers here) for the fanzine. During this time, the "karew" and I have been working hard to keep you informed on the latest happenings in the global Christian metal/rock scene; we have featured/interviewed some great artists, both old and new; and we have strived to keep Heaven's Metal a vital publication, as well as an instrument for ministry to this community. This issue we hear from a guy (Matt Hunt) who has also been working very hard to preserve Christian rock/metal's past, as well as its present and future. He takes you on a fun-filled "Vegas trip" to the recording studio of Bill Menchen (Titanic, Final Axe, The Seventh Power) where you will get an unprecedented perspective on one of Christian metal's pioneering and talented heroes in action. Also, in response to requests for more progressive rock coverage, I am excited to recommend three great bands this issue (see reviews): Amaran's Plight—a new project of Gary Wehrkamp (Shadow Gallery)—is conceptual and takes you on a fascinating rock ride through one man's near death experience as a child and how he deals with the repercussions of the event for the rest of his life; veterans Glass Hammer return, with guest Jon Anderson of Yes fame, for a psychedelic and spiritual exploration of mountain climbing; and the jazzy, Rush-influenced Tiles are back with some seriously melodic and rhythmic tunes sure to get your brain synapses firing. As always, we encourage you to support these very talented musicians. And don't worry … for those metalheads out there who have been looking for a new metal band to follow, look forward to a feature on "up and comers" Cage (US power metal) in the next issue, along with a very special, surprise interview with a former "masked" man. Stay tuned.

Humbly,

Jonathan "Doc" Swank

ELEMENTS

04 METAL TRACKS Cage, Kekal, Stryper, Johannes Jonsson's "Bullets from Sweden," Believer, Bride, X-Sinner, Avian, more.

08 ARMAGEDDON Jeff McCormack talks to a few old heavy metal friends.

12 ULTIMATUM Jeff Collins gives some due press to a deserving metal band.

14 DIARY OF A MATT-MAN Matt Hunt (of Retroactive Records) takes us to Vegas.

16 ALBUM REVIEWS fourteen of 'em.

18 ALBUM REVIEW RE-VISITED Chad Olson and Scott Waters dig up old wounds.

21 COLUMNS Steve Rowe and Pastor Bob.

Heaven's Metal Editorial Team:
Chris Beck, Bob Beeman, Jeff Collins, Mark Blair Glunt, Chris Gatto, Genifer Groff, Loyd Harp, Daniel Jesse, Johannes Jonsson, Mike Larson, Jeff McCormack, Trevor Ray, Steve Rowe, Jonathan Swank, Doug Van Pelt, Todd Walker

HMmagazine.com/heavensmetal/

1-year subscriptions (6 issues): $9.99 (USA) | $21.77 (Foreign)

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Grave Forsaken teases you with Horror And Sadness, the first single from their upcoming second Rowe Productions thrash album Destined For Ascension.

Following up their Rowe Productions debut, **Scourged Flesh** have crafted an album of fierce thrash/death metal with Bury The Lies.

Coming soon… **Synnnove**: The Whore And The Bride

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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads

Gyldne Tider

Aftenposten

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Ble drapstruet av satanistene

Smakfullt fra Sverige

Stjernedryss i Köln

i verdikamp

Vellykket kristenrock i Oslo

Fire på Nordicfest

NORDIC FEST REFLECTIONS

By STEVE ROWE

Playing at Nordic Fest was a dream come true for me. In its 10th year, Nordic Fest has become the icon event for Christian Extreme Metal bands to play. Being a fest that has 400 people in attendance over 3 days means that it is difficult for the organizers to bring bands from far shores like Australia. Thankfully, we were able to make Nordic Fest 2007 part of our *Live Humanitarian European Tour*. Unfortunately, our schedule was extremely tight, so we were actually only in Oslo for about 16 hours. Thus, we missed all the other bands playing and getting to spend time with all the people. We played in Holland on Nov. 8th, Nordic Fest on Nov. 9th and back in Germany Nov. 10th.

We arrived in Oslo at 6:05PM on the Friday night, the evening of our performance. It was great to see Paal (the promoter) from Nordic Mission once again. It was cold when we arrived—about 0 degrees—but no snow. We got to Sub Scene, the club where the Fest is held at about 7:30PM.

We ate some nice food and I started drinking herbal tea, which is nice to warm up the throat. I spent some time backstage with Devin, the lead vocalist for **Once Dead**. He was an inspirational guy. The others from Once Dead arrived and I had a good chat with **Glen Rodgers** (metal legend!). I am a big fan of Glen's playing, songwriting and I love the band **Hirax** also of which he has been a part.

We had a media session with many mics, tape recorders and media persons around us. The interviewers seemed very interested in the band's long history and especially in my time with cancer and following health struggles.

Little did I realize that a freelance journalist would pen such an interesting story and take such great photos; and that he would be able to successfully sell it to one of Norway's biggest newspapers. We ended up with the cover story on a newspaper in the country that is the home of black metal! Go figure. God works in mysterious ways for sure.

We hit stage at 10:00PM and played an enjoyable set to a responsive audience. Some fans remarked that we played the classic fast songs slow. I like to call it "controlled." With one drummer following Jayson, we made the blast beats into thrash beats, or "cut-time," to keep the speed flying. Around that era we got criticized for not being true to the original format of the songs. So this time we keep the blasts but made them bomb blasts for our more mature drummer Damien to play. Damien has only played blast beats for 2 years, even though he is a life-time drummer.

Bomb blast beats put the focus on thundering double kick making the Blast beats slower but more controlled speed-wise. Those songs are a challenge following a talent like Jayson leaving the band. We played for 80 minutes, which means we went over time. You can put that one down to me talking too much once again! I really enjoyed "savoring the moment" while on stage. It was our first show ever in Oslo and I felt a sense of God's victory in the Fest.

When the *Live Humanitarian* DVD finally comes out there will be bonus footage from the tour and people will see that the crowd at Nordic Fest really got into it. I enjoy playing small clubs like Sub Scene where we as a band are on the same level as the fans—all together enjoying the fun of metal for Jesus.

Read more of this at hmmag.com/heavensmetal

News bullets

Armageddon (see interview this issue) have not only just had their 1989 CD *Money Mask* reissued, but have also signed a two album deal with Retroactive Records for new material. They just launched a Myspace page to keep you informed (armageddonva).

Kekal has begun work on the rest of the material for their new album. This, their seventh album, had to be recorded in two winter recording sessions. Half was completed last winter, and the rest in now in progress. Keep an eye on their Myspace page for song samples and updates (kekal). Their official website is now at kekal.org.

We stumbled across some surprising talent while perusing the new ShoutLife.com network. Check out the band **Triggersoul** (shoutlife.com/triggersoul) and samples of their album to be released in April. Influenced by the likes of Pantera, Sabbath and Metallica, it sounds promising.

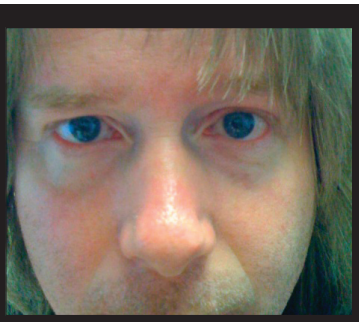
John Schlitt, multiple Grammy Award-winning recording artist an former vocalist for **Petra**, premiered the release of his third solo album, *The Grafting*, on January 22nd on Celebration, Daystar Television Network's one-hour live talk show program. Visit johnwschlitt.com for more information.

San Diego heavy metallers **Cage** are the first confirmed band for the *Nightmare Fest*, a brand new festival set to take place March 21-22 at Bourbon Street in New Port Richey, Florida. The event is the brainchild of **Lance King**—owner of Nightmare Records and former frontman of **Balance of Power** and **Pyramaze**. Commented King: "Why Florida? Because Minnesota is still cold and unfriendly in March, and usually deep in snow, and by that time I've had enough of all that! Plus it's spring break and everyone is on their way to Florida anyway … so that just seemed a no-brainer!"

Avian, the melodic metal band featuring singer Lance King and guitarist Yan Leviathan, has been confirmed for the Nightmare Metal Fest. Avian's new lineup is rounded out by guitarist Bill Hudson (Cellador, The Supremacy), bassist Mika Horiuchi (Cellador) and drummer Jerry B. Also scheduled to appear are Warmachine, Cage, Disasterpeace (the new band featuring singer Wade Black [Crimson Glory, Seven Witches, Leash Law, Black Reign, Leatherwolf], former King Diamond guitarist master Pete Blakk, renowned drummer Jesse Martillo [Crimson Glory] and bassist Chris Baylor), X-Thritien, Order of Nine, Sacred Dawn, Pownd, Six Minute Century and Shades of Twilight.

Cage will also be headlining the *Mexicali Metal Fest II* to be held on Saturday, May 17, 2008 at the Teatro del Estado in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Minneapolis, Minnesota prog-power metal band Seventh Calling; Los Angeles, California power metal band Ritual Habits and the up and coming classic heavy metal band White Wizzard, make up the 4 international bands confirmed for the event. In addition, 1 national and 2 local Mexican metal bands are to be confirmed in the coming days. The official My Space *Mexicali Metal Fest II* website can be found at the following link: [myspace.com/mexicalimetalfest]

Meet the Press



JEFF COLLINS

Age: 41

Fav metal albums of all time:
(There was metal in 2006? Who you kidding?) In Flames – *Come Clarity*

Favorite metal band(s) of all time:
Dangerous Toys, Kansas, Bang Tango, Iron Maiden, Zebra, Styx, Metallica, Rush, Triumph, ZZ Top, Scorpions, Metal Church, Divinefire, Impellitteri, Messiah Prophet, Bride, Audiovision, King James, Die Happy, Sin Dizzy, X-Sinner and... (the list goes on and on). It is a pretty safe bet that if they used no less than 6 cans of hair mousse in their hair and they used Aqua Net hairspray… I probably own it!

Favorite Movie(s): *Zoolander*, *Princess Bride*, *Spinal Tap*, *Momento*, *Rob Roy* and *300*!

TV: WKRP in Cincinnati, That 70's Show and The WWE! God bless America for the chance to fill my mind w/ such wholesome and nutritious propaganda.

Pet's Name: BeBe. We are trying to breed her but she keeps eating all the studs. What a (bleep)!

Interesting Fact: Through the grace of God, I have sixteen years clean and sober! I am the afternoon 'On-Air' personality for 91.7 The TRUTH in Dallas, TX and I think tattoos are cool!

Something Goofy: After eating a home cooked meal made by my lovely bride, I will take my 4 year old son outside and watch him play w/ all the creepy crawly things that he can find in the dirt while I enjoy a Cuban cigar. Yes, I am a Christian.

Final Word: Our biggest handicaps are found in the way we view each other. We are created in the image of God! Enough said. Be blessed.

JOHANNES JONSSON

Age: 35 years of Metal

Fav metal albums of all time:
Vengeance Rising – *Human Sacrifice* (the classic of classics!)
Stryper – *To Hell With The Devil*
Stryper – *Soldiers Under Command*
Deliverance – *Weapons of Our Warfare*
Harmony – *Dreaming Awake*
Schaliach – *Sonrise*
Divinefire – *Hero*
Whitecross – *Triumphant Return*
Bloodgood – *Out of The Darkness*
Sacred Warrior – *Master's Command*

Favorite Movies:
The Lord of the Rings
Braveheart
Gladiator
Jurassic Park
King Kong
Cutthroat Island
Pirates of the Caribbean

Interesting Fact: Besides music, I also like to fish.

Something Goofy: When I was fishing in Norway I got something really strange. My bait got stuck in the bottom and when it finally got loose I realized that I had something heavy on it. I thought it was a branch. But when I got it up from the water I saw that I had fished up a sea star and the bait had stuck in one of its arms! The sea star was very big and the length between the ends of the arms was 40 cm. Still have it on the wall at home.

Christoffer Johansson the former drummer of Inevitable End is now the new drummer of the black metal band **Shadows Of Paragon** [shadowsofparagon.com]

Narnia's slightly metalized cover of "In His Majesty's Service" is still available on their myspace site [myspace.com/narniaofficial]. Due to current personal situations within in the band they are not, as planned originally, doing any concerts at the moment, but plan to be back in the Spring of 2008. In the meantime the band are focusing on writing songs for their new album which is to be released in 2008.

Progressive Doom Metallers **Veni Domine** have issued the following update: "After an intense band meeting with loads of stuff on the agenda we also agreed on having **Gabriel** [**Ingemarson**] back on bass. It was really a no-brainer as he is the perfect match for the band both musically and personality-wise. After two years with stand-ins who did splendid work for the band, we're back to normal! "We really want to thank the ones filling on for Gabriel: **Ez Gomer**, **Peter Carlsohn**, Gary Kusthoss and the live preformers Johannes Stiigh and last but certainly not least **Andreas Olsson**, who had to put up with us the most. We love you all and you will always have a special place in our hearts!! "No we're just missing a keyplayer, but that's normal." Some of the new tracks from Veni Domine's brand new album, *Tongues*, is now available at [myspace.com/venidomine]

In the last issue we reported that **Majestic Vanguard** replaced their vocalist (**Peter Sigfridsson**) with temporary vocalist **Tommy Johansson** of **Rein Xeed**. The rehearsals, however, with Tommy have, unfortunately, not given the results they hoped for. Therefore they have decided to end the collaboration after the 2 gigs in Mullsjö and Halmstad. It is really sad things turned out to be this way, but both sides believe this is the right decision. The last weeks have been turbulent and with the results in their hands the band says they should have done things different. **Samuel Fredén**, one of the original members has also decided to leave the band, due to lack of time. Samuel however plans to record keyboards on their next album, so he will still be working with the band but in a different role. [majesticvanguard.net]

Jerusalem are now writing tunes for an upcoming album! The setting now consists of **Ulf Christiansson**, Peter Carlsohn, and **Michael Ulvsgärd**. [jerusalem.se]

X-Sinner has been working hard on finishing their new album *A World Covered in Blood*. Containing 11 all new tracks, it is slated for release in early 2008 on Image Records.

Thrash masters **Believer** were slated to begin recording a new album in November. Keep an eye on the new website for updates (believerband.net). All three of their previous releases have been remastered and are being reissued by Metal Mind Productions in mid-March 2008.

Stryper are reportedly busy recording the new album, promised to be a return to their roots of guitar solos and big vocal harmonies.

Transfigural Form has uploaded 46 songs to their web site, meaning you can now listen to every one of their albums released since 2001, along with unreleased tracks. For more information, check the blog on their Myspace page (transfiguralform).

METAL TRACKS

Page six

Doug's mailbag

C-STONE CAUGHT ON TAPE?

I was at Cornerstone this year and I got to say I loved the Friday night show. I very much enjoyed watching Whitecross; it was a blessing for me to see them. I also enjoyed the performance of Bloodgood and Bride. I know back in the day Heaven's Metal released video coverage from Cornerstone and many other different videos. I would like to know if Heaven's Metal would be releasing any videotapes featuring coverage of Cornerstone of 07. If you could let me know I would appreciate it. Thank you for your time.
–Jena Bova, via internet

Ed – No.

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

Hey Doug, where is the best place to purchase old metal CDs like Die Happy, Deliverance, Sacred Warrior, Holy Soldier, Guardian, Joshua, etc.? A lot of companies want $22.00 for imported CDs. I'm not looking for those … just regular releases on CD.
–Corey Heidenreich, via internet

Jonathan Swank (aka Doc) – Well, unfortunately, much of the "out of print" stuff is hard to find these days except on eBay. However, the most exhaustive "vault" of old school metal can be found at radrockers.com. Mike Delaney has been "keeping the classics alive" longer and better than just about anyone out there. But also try girdermusic.com and blastbeats.com.

WORSHIP AT ELEVEN

Love the mag. Also, I love the bands you bring to C-Stone Illinois. I was wondering if you could go old school and make some of those cool buttons of worship at full volume for the Heaven's Metal readers.
–Ben Aldrich, via internet

Doc – Hey, Ben. Don't tell Doug, but I think we should go one step farther and create buttons and bumper stickers specifically for Heaven's Metal that say, "Worship at Eleven," which is even louder than full volume … and then have a picture of an amp dial that goes to "11."

GENDERBENDER

Just a question you may or may not be able to answer. Whatever happened to Rackets and Drapes? I know that the last time they had any semblance of a website up it was pretty uninformative as to the happenings of the band, and it had these links to the transgendered community, etc. I was looking at the industrial/goth issue #69 this AM (blast from the past) and thought you might know what had happened to them. Thanks, Doug.
– Steve Ruff, via internet

Ed – There's talk of a reunion and a package tour with Rackets & Drapes and Paris Oroborus (ex-globalwavesystem and ex-anticrisis) this summer. I'm not sure if and how any, uh, "strange" philosophies regarding gender have been resolved. Perhaps we'll find out at Cstone.

HM MAG

I am new to the Christian rock scene. I don't know many bands and I wanted to learn of more. I have, however, become a big fan of Red and Demon Hunter. A few days ago my wife gave me a copy of your mag, with Demon Hunter on the cover. It was delivered to her job, though it had no send to address or name. I had no idea your mag existed. Praise God!
–Shane Brooks, via internet

Ed – It's always fun to discover something like this scene; and the fact that there's so much good music is really encouraging.

HEAVEN'S METAL

Thank you Doug for putting out your magazine all these years. I was actually a subscriber years ago around the start of your mag; that's why I also recently subscribed to Heaven's Metal. Man, what a blast from the past. I just recently got myself a computer, so being able to have this access has been awesome. Keep up the great work and I am looking forward to worshiping at full volume again. God Bless.
–John Crockett, via internet

Ed – Maybe there's something to Doc's idea about making some of those buttons or shirts again...

WHERE, OH WHERE IS VICTOR?

Hey Doug, have you ever thought about doing a "where are they now" on Victor Macias? I've tried for years to get the scoop on him, but with hardly any success. Any new developments or insights on Victor?
Eli Sanders, via internet

Ed – Seems like I heard he was jamming with ex-believer / atheist Gary Lenaire, but that could just be a rumor. I'll look into it and let ya'll know...

[nothin' but] **News bullets**

Bride is working on doing another tour of Brazil in early 2008. Also, song writing for the new album is going great, and they expected to start recording after the holidays (so hopefully are in the thick of it now). They say the direction will be more straight forward rock along the line of Zeppelin, White Stripes, and Rage Against the Machine. Oh, and in case you have not already heard, Troy is not moving to Italy after all…thus the new album and tour.

Dale had this to say, "In the next coming months things here are going to be crazy. The process of writing music for us is an adventure and filled with unimaginable excitement. Troy and I have decided to take the band into a direction that we should have gone a long time ago. When we were growing up there were so many great and talented bands writing memorable, age lasting songs. Bands such as Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, Kansas, Blue Oyster Cult, Black Sabbath, Eagles, Deep Purple, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Pink Floyd, Rolling Stones, Slade, ZZ Top and (a big favorite of the band) The Cult, which came along a little later."

"With that said, what we hope to do is combine many of the same vibes that we grew up on and produce an intense raw CD which showcases what we do best. And what we do best is play live. Over the years, so many people have told us after seeing us in concert that the concerts were so much better than the records we were producing. Not to discredit any of our past producers, but it is very hard for (a band on our level) to capture that energy of a live show in the studio. There are too many factors involved. But we have learned a few studio tricks over the years and believe we can give our audience the raw essence and the soul of Bride."

The serious writing has already begun. Dale and **Troy** have been collaborating and will soon bring in Michael Loy on drums and so far they are still searching for the right bassist.

At the present Dale is involved in many things outside of the band. He is doing EMS work for the county in which he lives. He is also now a personal strength trainer and coach at the local YMCA. Along with his day job he doesn't have a lot of time. But once the full direction is none as to which way to point the band, Dale and Troy (who is still in computer operations and management at Fort Knox) will devote their time to producing the next Bride release.

A plan for a "fan financed CD" is being drafted and once this is complete you will be given the instructions on how to participate in this venture. As for now, keep Bride and their families in your prayers and expect great things (maybe even a tour) for 2008.

In the "Damage Control Department" – **The World to Ashes** review (issue 72) was written by Loyd Harp, not Chris Gatto as it was incorrectly printed; also, the band's label is Whirlwind Records, not Open Grave.

And, in the late-breaking news department: **Lust Control** is still not getting back together.

RETROACTIVE RECORDS

WHITECROSS – NINETEEN EIGHTY SEVEN (with 6 bonus tracks)
Complete Re-recording of original debut self-titled 1987 release featuring the bonus tracks "Love On The Line" and "Re:Animate" (all Rex Carroll guitar jam/solo) + 4 hidden out takes. Fans of Ratt, Motley Crue, and Stryper won't find anything more worthy of their money than this release! Originally released on Girder Records, this instant classic now finds new life with Retroactive Records.

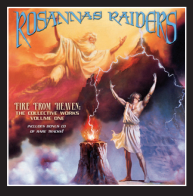
ARMAGEDDON –THE MONEY MASK (Collector's Edition) (2 CD set)
Disc one contains the 1989 (originally on Regency Records) classic metal masterpiece, Money Mask album completely Remastered, plus the bonus track "Blazing Wasteland" from the legendary metal compilation, East Coast Metal (1988). Disc two contains 13 bonus tracksof demos and rarities when they were called Second Chance.

DELIVERANCE – RIVER DISTURBANCE (Collector's Edition)
The original 1994 release in its entirety, completely remastered with all new artwork. Features four high quality bonus tracks (1 rare & 3 previously unreleased). Melodic, dark, and absolutely brilliant progressive metal. Fans of HIM and Savior Machine will rejoice for an enhanced version of the original masterpiece.

DELIVERANCE – AS ABOVE~SO BELOW
Few groups have ever blended epic thrash / speed metal with the elegance and beauty of progressive metal (later period Deliverance) with such devastating skill and brutality. Alternating so many moments of beauty with beastly moments of metallic fury and spine snapping riffs that would seem right at home on a Slayer, Believer, or early Deliverance album.

SARDONYX – MAJESTIC SERENITY / REBEL OF REASON
Remastered and reissued, this previously rare & crunchy thrash metal release now includes the band's original demo!
For fans of Testament & early Megadeth!

ULTIMATUM – INTO THE PIT
The masters of thrash metal are back!!! Into the Pit qualifies as a juggernaut of North American metal. Following the footsteps of fellow peers Exodus, Tourniquet, Vengeance Rising, Megadeth. Overkill, and Forbidden, expect fiery, blowtorch riffs and scorching solos, thundering bass, fast drumming and a wealth of Mastodonian rifferry, the boys have clearly learned from their elders, and learned well!



ROSANNA'S RAIDERS – FIRE FROM HEAVEN: The Collective Works (Collector's Edition) 3 albums on 2 CDs. The1987 release Calling Down Fire and the 1988 release Clothed In Fire (both originally on Pure Metal Records) in their entirety are both on disc 1. Disc 2 has the extremely collectible and previously impossible to find 1985 pro quality 10 song demo called We Are Raiders. Thoroughly remastered for brilliant sonic clarity. For fans of Vixen, Rez, Barnabas, and Heart.

TITANIC – WRECKAGE (THE BEST OF & THE REST OF)
Remastered tracks from the original versions of Maiden Voyage (1st album), Screaming In Silence (2nd album) and their latest Full Steam Ahead. As an added bonus, fans are treated to two rare tracks and two previously unreleased tracks all featuring Robert Sweet from Stryper. 17 total tracks.

MAIN LINE RIDERS – SHOT IN THE DARK
Anthemic hooks, cleverly mixing snarl and attitude, the band has no problems paying homage to their musical rabbis, AC/DC, Guns-n-Roses, and Skid Row, while appealing to fans of modern day bands Vains of Jenna, Buck Cherry, and The Showdown.

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ARMAGEDDON

Where Are They Now?

BY JEFF MCCORMACK

NOT A WHOLE LOT WAS KNOWN OR REPORTED BACK IN THE DAY ABOUT THE BAND ARMAGEDDON. FORMERLY KNOWN AS SECOND CHANCE, THEY RELEASED TWO DEMOS AND APPEARED ON A COMPILATION ALBUM BEFORE RELEASING A FULL ALBUM OF THEIR OWN (1989'S *MONEY MASK*), AND THEN IT WAS AS IF THE BAND TOTALLY FELL OFF THE RADAR. 2007 SEES THE RE-ISSUE OF *MONEY MASK* BY RETROACTIVE RECORDS AS A DOUBLE CD, TO INCLUDE THE SECOND CHANCE DEMOS AND MORE. THIS INTERVIEWER HAD THE PLEASURE OF BEING THERE FROM THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST DEMO, AND EVEN SPENT MOST OF THE WEEK AT CORNERSTONE 1987 HANGING OUT WITH ROBBY LEE, SO I HAVE BEEN A BIG FAN ALL ALONG. SO NOW TWENTY YEARS FROM THEIR BEGINNING, WE TRACK DOWN VOCALIST MIKE VANCE, GUITARISTS ROBBY LEE & ROBERT (PJ) BUSSEY, BASSIST DANNY WILKINSON AND DRUMMER JOE HASSELVANDER TO SEE WHERE THEY ARE NOW.

JM: Armageddon was such a good band, but it seemed like so little was ever written about you. Tell us first a little of the history of the band.
MV: Basically Robby and I met (1987), and we started writing some songs together. A friend of mine, Mark Miley had a four-track reel-to-reel recorder, so we decided to put some of the ideas down on tape. Those later became the *Second Chance* demos, which later got into the hands of Doug Mann who put us on the *East Coast Metal* compilation album (alongside Believer, Taker, Apostle, Rage of Angels, and others). So it was just basically the three of us then, and we had Danny (at that time in Taker) to put down some bass lines for us.

RL: Going back before that, I was a drummer in bar bands, playing six nights a week. I picked up a newspaper and saw an ad saying, "Christian singer looking to form a Christian metal band." This was back when Stryper, Barren Cross, etc. were hot on the scene. I wasn't planning on joining his band idea; I just wanted to meet someone that liked that kind of music. We hung out some, and I mentioned playing drums, but that my current schedule of playing out six nights a week wouldn't allow me to be involved in his group, and he understood. But then he kept calling and calling me, so I said okay.

I sent the demos to Heaven's Metal and the other mags at the time, and it got rave reviews, and we started getting calls, and it took off from there. It was all by the grace of God that this all happened. So it started as a two-man project with some outside help. The Armageddon release was supposed to be another project too, and we never really expected to do live shows, but it just kind of blossomed. For that record we brought in Charlie Phillips, Phil Zeo (who wrote the song "Give it To You"), and Joe on some of the drums, and Mark Miley did the rest.

RB: I began working with the band after the album was recorded. I had been in Taker with Danny, and I was brought in for the touring and played the parts Charlie Phillips had recorded on the album since he couldn't tour with them.

DW: My involvement was mainly in doing much of the studio work, and then later a few of the live shows. The album came out right around the birth of my first son, so I pretty much stopped playing at that point. My career with the band wasn't really a very long one.

JH: I have known Robby forever, basically. He was the one that turned me on to heavy metal for a second time in my life. I had become a jazz/fusion drummer back in the early seventies. Around 1974 I met Robby, and he turned me on to a lot of great bands, and told me I could make better money playing this style. So it was a good thing, and I did make a lot more money (laughter). So I trust Robby, and consult with him, and was pleased to do the songs. He asked me to come in and do the faster drum tracks, and it was great.

OK, so now to the root of this whole discussion. Where are you now?
RL: I had continued playing music six nights a week, in a blues rock style band. So I am still a full time musician.

MV: I now live down in Southwest Florida, and have been working on and off for years with my brother playing his style of music, which is in the folk/Celtic genre. We are the Vance Brothers (craigvance.com), and started playing out together when we were kids, playing coffee houses, etc. We take an annual tour to Europe to play, going to Ireland last year, and Germany this year. We're heading back to Ireland next year around April. He'll come to Florida and we'll do some dates, then I'll go to NY and do some gigs with him there. It is pretty much a 180 switch from Armageddon, getting back to classic Celtic roots.

JH: I am up in Massachusetts now, and I am still active with the band Raven, who I have played with since the late eighties. I have been in a lot of bands, and have done a lot of albums over the years. I now have a solo CD out now, called *House of Hasselvander* available through my MySpace site (myspace.com/thehoundsofhasselvander).

RB: After Armageddon, Danny and I continued on throughout the 90's, kind of picking up where Taker left off. We had a band called The Calm, which my wife sang for. We released an EP which was kind of a progressive metal style, and then around 1997 we did an almost full-length released called *Confessions of a Thirsty Tongue*, which was more progressive, but more rock than metal.

In 2001 I did a solo CD as PJ Bussey called *The Faultline Dance*. And from there began work on what is now *The Attic Symphony*. That release started as a Taker reunion, but we never could work it out to get Kevin in to do the vocals, so I finished it as an instrumental, and it ended up as one of the better projects I have ever done. It is just pure instrumental classic metal. *Attic Symphony 2* is also now available for online download, and soon for actual CD (myspace.com/atticsymphony).

DW: For me, the past five years I have been building up my own tile business. Aside from doing a little music here and there, sitting in with some locals occasionally, I have just been working hard to get paid every week.

So, with everyone now so spread out, what are the possibilities of a reunion CD or show? Is it something you all would be interested in?
MV: Well, we pulled it off in 2005. It is just dependent on the reason and timing. We'd definitely like to do more studio work together. Robby, Joe and I all have stuff we're working on, and we have begun talking about trying to get together next year to put something together.

JH: Yes, we have been discussing doing a new album in 2008, so I look forward to fully participating this time.

RB: Oh yes, I would be absolutely interested, and love to be involved in an actual Armageddon recording project. I wasn't able to be a part of the first one, but it is definitely an idea that we have discussed on and off for some time now. I love working with Mike and Robby, and they are some of my favorite people and best friends ever.

DW: Robby mentioned the idea to me, and yes, I would be more than interested to play and be a part of it. I was part of the 2005 show and it was a blast.

Any final comments?
RL: We'd just like to say thanks to everyone who supported us and showed enough interest to have got our CD reissued. Visit us at myspace.com/armageddonva

"...we have been discussing doing a new album in 2008."

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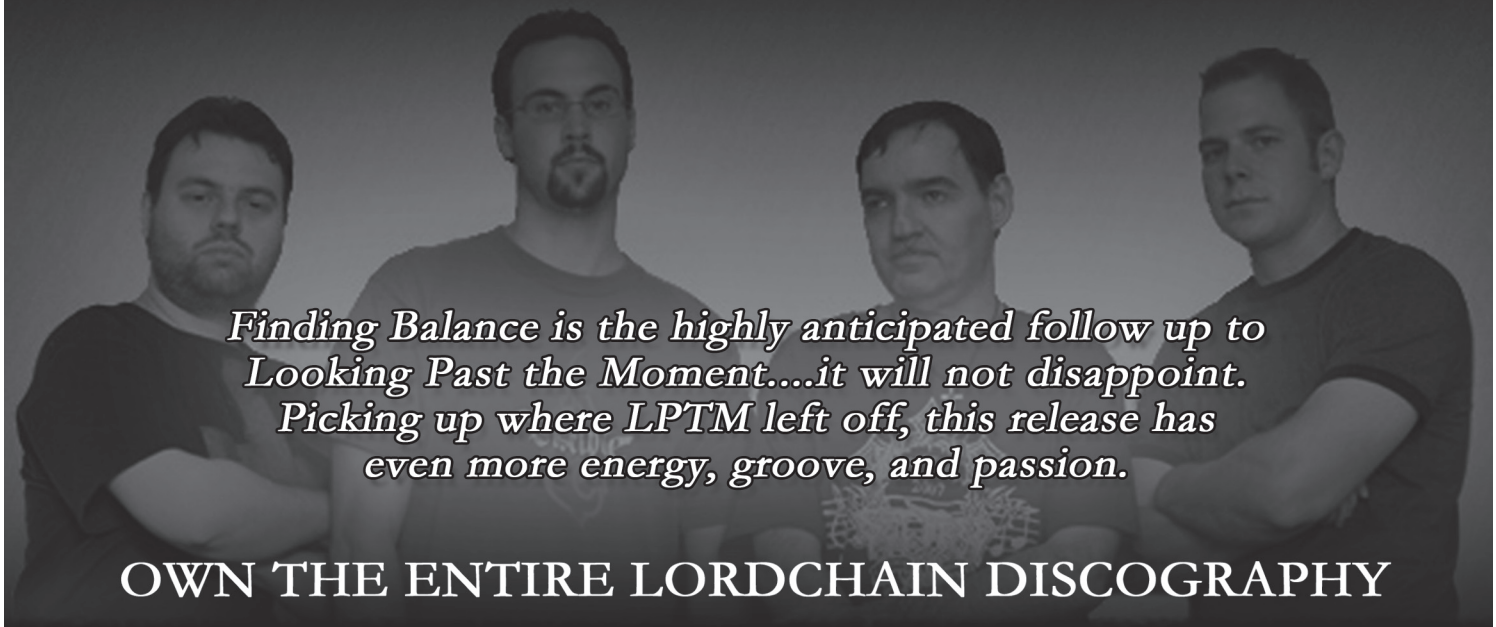

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into the pit with ULTIMATUM

INTERVIEW BY JEFF COLLINS

ULTIMATUM (ul-ti-ma-tum) n. 1. A final proposition. 2. One whose rejection will end negotiations and cause a definite action. 3. "Choose this day who you will serve." 4. A metal band whose sound is a mixture of traditional heavy, power/speed/thrash metal and more modern grooves; brutal guitars, blazing leads, pounding drums, thundering bass and shrill, shrieking vocals.

Ultimatum began in early 1992 by founder Robert Gutierrez and guitarist Steve Trujillo. Scott joined in January 1993. At the same time, Ultimatum were looking for a permanent drummer. Mike Lynch joined the band in March of 1994. In 1993 they released their first demo, titled *Fatal Delay,* that was sold worldwide and began to give them a dedicated following. A full length tape titled *Symphonic Extremities* by Ultimatum was released independently by the band and captured raving reviews in metal publications across the globe. In January of 1997, Ultimatum licensed *Symphonic Extremities* to Juke Box Media to be released on a national level with the added bonus cut, "World of Sin." "World of Sin" received airplay worldwide and was in the top 10 on the Pure Rock Report's LOUD Chart for several weeks. "World of Sin" would be the last song recorded with drummer Mike Lynch. Current drummer Sean Griego joined the band in May 1997. 2000 saw Ultimatum record their third full length disc, titled *The Mechanics of Perilous Times*. Also during this year, long time bassist Tom Michaels left the band and was replaced by California native Rob Whitlock.

"Our interests have never been to be the fastest, or the heaviest, or even the most bizarre. We really don't care to be trendy. Rather we want to write good, heavy, memorable metal songs with lyrics that will challenge the listener."
–Vocalist, Scott Waters

JC: Scott, you have been the front man for Ultimatum since 1993 and now with the release of *Into the Pit,* what do you see on the immediate horizon for you and your band mates?
SW: I'm just glad we finally got *Into the Pit* out. We've been working on it in one form or another since 2005. We recorded four songs for a demo that we sent out to labels to see if we could generate some interest. Two years later and the album is finally here. We are really proud of it. In the immediate future, we are doing various shows to support the CD. We hope to get out to Europe next summer. We are also working on a DVD release that we hope to have out in early 2008.

"Our interests have never been to be the fastest, or the heaviest, or even the most bizarre. We really don't care to be trendy. Rather we want to write good, heavy, memorable metal songs with lyrics that will challenge the listener."

Few and far between are the bands that progress with each release without changing or modernizing their sound. Why have you guys stayed the course of "all metal, all the time?"
We are just doing what we love. Robert, Rob and I are all metal fans. It's just what we like. One thing that has worked in our favor is that Ultimatum has never been our source of income. None of us have ever made a dime from this band and we all work full time jobs to support our families. So, because of that, we are not forced to try to keep up with trends to stay afloat in a fickle music market. Thankfully there are many others out there like us who love heavy metal and thrash too. We have a very faithful fan base to which we are very grateful.

Did you ever see Ultimatum coming this far or lasting this long when you first signed on?
Well, I don't that we've come very far. (laughs) I think we are just a bunch of guys who love the Lord and have a passion for playing heavy metal music. I'm 40 years old now and love doing what I do as much now as I did when I was in my twenties.

Tell us about Scott Waters before Ultimatum.
Well, it was through the friendship of Chris Brooks, vocalist for Holy Saint, that I gave my life to Christ in 1987. Before that time I had always considered myself a Christian. I went to church. I was active in my youth group. I actually thought I was better than many of the other kids in my youth group. I showed up to youth group in my Molly Hatchet and Aerosmith concert shirts and was the same person in church that I was outside of church. I knew many of those youth outside the group and while they put on their best Sunday suit for the pastor, outside they were doing the same things I was doing. Many in the church looked down at me because I didn't fit into what they wanted me to be and I resented them for it. However, I was no better than them. I was just being rebellious and had never truly trusted Christ. It was a matter of head knowledge and not true faith.

I was in college in the 80's and was at a concert with some friends from school. We were waiting to see Motorhead and Raven at the Penny Arcade in Rochester, NY. It was there I met the band Holy Saint as they were outside the club witnessing to people in the crowd. My roommate at the time was talking to them and made a comment to one of the Holy Saint guys that "Scott is religious." Indeed I was. I could talk the talk for sure. Chris and Rod from Holy Saint became my friends on that day. We hung out regularly and I went to church on Sunday mornings with them. They never said anything to me about my lifestyle or anything. However, I saw something in them that I knew I didn't have. I now realize that what they had was the Spirit of God that was given to them as the earnest of their salvation. I wanted that for myself. Driving home from a Bible study with them one night I just decided I wanted to trust God and something changed in my heart. I went back to my college dorm and announced to my roommates that I was a Christian and would no longer be drinking or taking part in the whole party scene we were involved in. It's amazing how fast your friends will drop you when you make an announcement like that. (laughs) I've been a believer ever since that time.

I have always believed you can tell a lot about someone by the music they listen to. Who do you have in your CD player right now?
At the moment of this interview I'm actually sitting here listening to Gary Moore - Dirty Fingers. However, some albums I've been listening to lately are the new albums from Dirty Looks, Coheed and Cambria, Overkill, 3 Inches of Blood and Ted Nugent. There is also a host of great new thrash bands out that I've been enjoying like Fueled by Fire, Merciless Death and Evile from the UK.

The Bible is full of history, wisdom and of course the incredible message of salvation. What is one of your favorite stories in the Bible and why?
I can't think of one story to list, but the Apostle Paul in his many New Testament writings has really spoken to me over the years. At times it convicts me, almost like looking into a mirror and seeing my imperfections. At the same time it comforts me, such as when I read that a man like Paul also struggled with sin and thought of himself as the chief of sinners. He showed me that I don't need to play religion to be holy; but rather, I am holy because of Jesus. That gives me a lot of comfort.

Let's get back to Ultimatum's new release. With this being your fourth full length recording featuring all new songs (released on Retroactive Records), and your first offering of new material in six years, what stands out most with *Into The Pit*?
Robert's guitar playing. He just outdid himself on this one. The riffs, the rhythm playing, and the solos… I love it all. I truly enjoy listening to this CD from beginning to end. I must also give credit to Ysidro Garcia, our engineer at Sight16 Studios. He did a great job for us.

You guys sound heavier, and seem to have cranked the knobs up to "11." Scott, you seem to have reached a new level that exceeds efforts on previous albums. Extra vitamins this time around or what?
Indeed! Actually there is a line in the song "Heart of Metal" that states, "turn it up, push to eleven." Perhaps it's the constant pumping of iron at the gym or the daily protein shakes. (laughs) Thanks for the compliment. We are very proud of this release. I do think it's our heaviest and our best yet. I think part of the reason it sounds so heavy is just because of the improved production and recording quality. Having recorded multiple demos and albums over the years we have just learned what works best for us and what doesn't. One thing that really helped this CD was having Robert record all the rhythm guitars. We are a two guitar band and in the past we've always had both guitarists record rhythms and we would pan them 80/20 into the mix. Having one guitarist record all the parts makes for a much tighter sound. Another thing is the influence of bassist Rob Whitlock. Rob joined Ultimatum in 2002 and has been an important part of the writing process ever since.

On *Into the Pit* you covered an Iron Maiden tune "Wrathchild." Why?
For years we had been doing a cover of Vengeance Rising's "Burn" in concert. However, since we mostly play in clubs and bars, most people we were playing to didn't even realize it was a cover. Many people assumed it was our song. We thought it might be cool to start playing a song more people were familiar with. Also, we are all Iron Maiden fans in Ultimatum, so it was just a natural song for us to cover. Like "Burn," we weren't playing it note for note as Vengeance had played it. We were making the song our own; so why not record "Wrathchild" and give it an Ultimatum sound. We talked of covering other songs; and I have even brought up the idea to the band about making our next release be a collection of cover songs.

Well if and when you guys do a cover album, I would love to hear what Ultimatum can do with another Maiden tune "Run to the Hills" or maybe "Fight the Good Fight" by Triumph! Share in 10 words or less… God.
My Father who loves me.

HEAVENS METAL

DIARY OF A MATT-MAN

By Matt Hunt

I GREW UP WEARING OUT ALL MY ISSUES OF HEAVEN'S METAL MAGAZINE, AND DRIVING MY GAITHER-LOVING PARENTS CRAZY WITH THE LIKES OF STRYPER, BRIDE, AND DANIEL BAND BLARING FROM MY BEDROOM SPEAKERS. RUNNING A LABEL LIKE RETROACTIVE RECORDS GIVES ME THE RARE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW AND WORK WITH MANY OF THE BANDS THAT HAD A SERIOUS IMPACT ON MY LIFE GROWING UP. YET THE THOUGHT OF FLYING FROM MY HOME IN IOWA TO LAS VEGAS TO HANG OUT WITH ROBERT SWEET (THE DRUMMER OF THE LEGENDARY STRYPER) AND BILL MENCHEN (GUITAR VIRTUOSO FOR TITANIC, FINAL AXE, AND THE SEVENTH POWER) SEEMED TOO GOOD TO BE POSSIBLE. THIS TRIP HAD "EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME" WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. I AM 37 YEARS OLD AND LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORY, I COULD BARELY THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE FROM THE MOMENT I BOOKED THE PLANE TICKETS.

In 2006 we had asked Robert to play drums on the Seventh Power and Final Axe releases and the results were astounding. Midway through 2007, **Bill** and I finally decided we should reissue *Maiden Voyage* and *Screaming in Silence* by Titanic, as well as *Beyond Hell's Gate* by Final Axe. We knew replacing the drum machines on those albums with Robert's killer drums would give them an unbelievable sound. It then occurred to me that these projects were for my label and that **Robert Sweet** was a central figure in the single most influential and popular Christian metal band of all time. What was stopping me from going to hang out with Bill and Robert when the drums were being recorded? Bill and I have been friends since the debut Titanic reissue in 2000 (my label then was Magdalene Records). Seven years and ten releases later my friendship with Bill—who is a tremendous human being and phenomenal musician—continues to inspire me to work hard for the label. We talked it over, I got the time off work and it was a plan!

When I got to Vegas in mid October, Robert was preparing to lay down drum tracks for *Beyond Hell's Gate* at Bill's home recording studio. This would be the first time I had the chance to spend enough time with Robert when he would actually remember who I was. To make the trip even better, my close friends **Rob Colwell** (Bombworks Records) and **Cliffy Huntington** (Main Line Riders and Retroactive Records) met me in Las Vegas to take part in the four days of festivities. As much as I was anticipating a great four days, I could never have anticipated how amazing my time in Vegas would end up being.

DAY ONE

Once Rob, Cliffy and I hooked up at the airport we rented a car, checked into the hotel, and started our journey to meet two of the most prominent musicians in our metal scene. The Main Line Riders debut CD *Shot In the Dark* had arrived from manufacturing the day before we left home, so we were jamming to it on our way to Bill's house. Unexpectedly, Cliffy "hot boxed" us, which resulted in us all busting out in laughter and all four windows being rolled down immediately! Rob had never actually met Cliffy before, but trust me when I say Cliffy left an unmistakable impression. Little did we know how much this would set the tone for the next four days!

AT BILL'S HOUSE

We were waiting at the house when Bill and Robert arrived at 3pm. Robert was wearing a long sleeved black t-shirt, a trimmed beard, and of course, his trademark long blonde hair. Bill was looking like an off-duty military officer with the trim hair cut and stern face that makes his great sense of humor all the better. Introductions were made and Robert was super gracious to us. We didn't waste any time getting pictures right there in Bill's front yard. The next two hours were spent sitting in the living room with Bill and Robert talking about Stryper and Robert's life. All three of us had been Stryper fans since *Yellow & Black Attack* released in 1984, so we were hanging on his every word! Robert didn't disappoint us; he was opening up to us like we had been his friends for the last 20 years.

Eventually, we made it to a ridiculously great Thai restaurant where Bill eats at least once a week. Robert and I both like spicy foods, so we split a giant dish of curry chicken. Then we all shared some amazing Thai desert with coconut ice cream. It was delicious food, but when we left, I couldn't get over the fact that I had just split a Thai dish with Robert Sweet! Yeah, I was star struck, but I was trying not to let it show. Robert is the consummate rock star. It's not a role that he plays, it's just who he is. He loves the look and loves to please the fans. Fortunately for us, Robert was all rock star, but without the sense of entitlement that comes with so many famous people. Robert treats people with true respect, never arrogant or rude in any way.

THE RECORDING BEGINS FOR THE RE-RELEASE OF *BEYOND HELL'S GATE* BY FINAL AXE

Cliffy and Rob were veterans of studio recording, but I had only been in a recording studio a few times. Robert was actually a little nervous, which seemed crazy to me, but I wasn't worried at all. He knew I had come from Iowa to see him play for this album and he didn't want to disappoint anyone. The first song of the day was "Are You Ready?" Bill played through the song from the CD one time so Robert could get an idea of what he would be playing. One time through the song and Robert was in the drum room ready to start laying down the new tracks. I couldn't believe it when he was done just 10 minutes later! His drumming was nothing less than brilliant; it completely transformed the song in ways that Bill could never have imagined. As Robert was playing the drums, the rest of us knew something really special was happening and it pretty much left us speechless… It was that great.

Up next was "Soldier of Compromise," which was another 10 minutes of greatness. The third and last song of the night was "War Cry," which was exceptionally memorable because Rob and I sat in the drum room right in front of the drum kit while Robert played. Again, it was pure magic. I have no idea how someone can have no idea what he's going to play, walk into the studio, and play brilliantly… It's a gift. After "War Cry," Bill showed us his guitar collection, most of which was stashed in his closet. I asked to see the guitar that he used most on Titanic's *Full Steam Ahead* release. The album is so amazing that it was a thrill just to stand in the studio where it was recorded with the man who created it and hold the guitar he used to craft a metal masterpiece. It is a 1984 Gibson Flying V (check it out at theseventhpower.com) for all you gear heads out there.

On the way back to the hotel, Cliffy made us stop at a convenience store so he could get supper—a bag of Doritos and a sandwich in a plastic tri-angle box! He wouldn't eat a bite of the food we had at the restaurant voted "the most authentic Thai food in Vegas." And, as he is eating his gas station food, he tells Rob and me that he has "no idea how we could eat that nasty Thai food." Unbelievable. It's stuff like this that made Rob and me laugh so hard when Bill's wife told him, "I really like that guy Goofy. He's the really cool one." It was then that Bill knew she meant "Cliffy!"

At the end of the night, we made it back to the hotel room realizing that day one of our Vegas trip was greater than we could have ever dreamed. Rob had driven around the airport 12 times, nearly crashing moments before finally finding me (it reminded me of National Lampoon's *European Vacation*!). We heard how years ago Robert had found a guitarist that blew him away. He and the guy jumped in a car and drove 12 hours to see Barren Cross's Mike Lee to put a band together only to see things unravel. Robert told us how he and Tommy Lee had spent the day at Tommy's grandma's house having a "little listening party" with *Shout At the Devil* and *Yellow & Black Attack*! One of the most memorable stories of the day was hearing Robert tell us how miserable he was recording drums for *Soldiers Under Command*. The recording took place in a large building that was a lot like an airplane hangar. No one bothered to tell Robert that 30 No-Doze had been dumped into the coffee pot. On a whim, he jumped up and chugged the whole pot of coffee at once! He was so wired he could barely stand it. The drums for that classic album were recorded in just 8 hours!

DAY 2

After a Starbucks run in the hotel lobby, we meet Bill and Robert for lunch. Bill looks directly at Rob and calmly states, "The stool sample you ordered has arrived." Immediately, we knew Bill could have a second career as a nurse if the whole music thing didn't work out! This was typical Bill Menchen humor for the week, and it was great! We ate at a place called Inka's. The spicy food must have brought out the best in Robert, because he started telling us all about the "freakiest" fans he ever encountered during Stryper glory days; those with tattoos in all places, gold diggers, and people with tape recorders were key players in these jaw-dropping stories.

After lunch, we headed back to the house for more recording. We ended up sitting in the living room talking to Robert more about his life and Stryper. As usual, he was very transparent and extremely generous with all his stories. He opened up about the joys, but also about some of the extreme hardships, that have weighed heavy on him over the years. I was thrilled to find out that Robert loves Mopars – Dodge and Chrysler hot rods. I listened with great interest at his stories of all the great cars he had owned when Stryper was a household name and the cash was flowing freely. And I continued to listen with great interest when he went on and on about all the rare, amazing cars he had come across over the years that had somehow slipped through his fingers.

THE RECORDING CONTINUES

"Don't Run Away" is the first song of the day; Robert nails it in two takes. I realize now that the ritual before every song is Robert saying, "Now guys, I don't really know what I'm doing." We all roll our eyes because we know Robert is going to do great. Even as Robert completes the drums in one take, I feel great (as a record label owner) because I realize that Robert is a beat monster and Bill is a rhythm monster… And, when these two guys get together in the studio, great things happen! When Robert finished laying drums for the track, Bill said in amazement, "I never thought of that! It changes the whole song … brilliant!" And he was right. After Robert finishes drums for "No Time To Die," Cliffy (who has been in professional bands for over a decade) is inspired to comment that Robert is one of the best drummers ever. The fourth song of the day is "Blind Faith." I got to sit in the drum room with a camcorder and all I could think about was how lucky I was to be in the room while Robert Sweet was recording drums… He did great and I have the video to prove it!

About this time, Ray Kilsdonk shows up. He played bass on the *His Witness* (summer 2008 Retroactive Records release) and Titanic's *Maiden Voyage* releases. It was really cool to get to meet Ray. Bill couldn't resist breaking out the videos and pictures of himself, Ray, Robert, and David St. Martins (Titanic vocalist) when they were briefly in a glammed up Rod Stewart Tribute band (yeah, you read that correctly!). It was a hoot seeing those leopard spotted clothes with hot pink hats! Without a doubt, the greatest treat of the day was getting introduced to the Robert Tilton farting video on U-tube. It had all of us rolling in laughter to the point of tears.

DAY 3

After getting up at 9:30, we make our way down to the Starbucks in the lobby. Rob and I are standing in line waiting for our turn to order when the cashier says, "Can I take your order?" We both turn around to see if she is talking to someone behind us, but we are the only people in line. Once again she appears to look past us and says, "Can I take your order?" Again, we step aside and turn around to see if there is anyone behind us, only to see no one. It was then that I realized the cashier was cross-eyed and that she had been speaking to us the whole time! I finally ordered my Green Tea for just $5.66 (how do they make any money on those discount drinks?) and went on my way, more than just a little embarrassed.

Of course we wanted to have drum sticks for Robert to sign, so we all we stopped in at Guitar Center on the way to the studio. We picked up new sticks to give Robert in exchange for him signing the sticks he had been using to record drums the past few days. When we jumped back into the truck, Robert had brought a ton of Stryper memorabilia like belt buckles, leather wrist bands, photos, sweatshirts, etc. to give to the Rob and Cliffy. We were blown away by Robert's generosity and willingness to share his personal experience with Stryper with us. When we got back to Bill's house Robert said he had something special for me. I was floored when he presented me with one of the cymbals he used on the Reborn tour. He put his signature and trademark "777" all over it. I still can't believe he gave such a great gift to me.

Being the world's number one Beavis & Butthead fan, Robert brought one of his season DVD sets to share his favorite episodes with us. We made our way to Bill's amazing A/V room, featuring a large projector screen and a crisp surround sound system. We laughed our way through about an hour of grunts, burps and all around juvenile behavior before the recording for day 3 began.

Continued on page 20

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ALBUM REVIEWS

VIRGIN BLACK

REQUIEM FORTISSIMO

The second release in the epic final chapter of a great band, *Fortissimo* ratchets it up a notch, and provides beautiful, yet brutal, funeral doom. The album takes you on an emotional journey few albums can. Blending death metal vocals with their old gothic influence makes this a masterpiece that keeps revealing new levels as you listen to it, over and over again. [The End Records] Daniel Jessie

CAGE

HELL DESTROYER

There is no doubt in my mind that fans of pure Judas Priest/Iron Maiden inspired, straight-up power metal will not find a better release this year—at least not in the US market—and that fans of epic Savatage/Iced Earth concept-based American power metal will rejoice when they listen to *Hell Destroyer*. This concept album—fictional, yet based on the book of Revelations—is just overflowing with aggressive, galloping riffs, scorching solos, heavy drumming and throbbing bass lines. Rob Halford influenced singer Sean Peck has a diverse vocal approach which plays a big part in the Cage sound. Certainly, the success of any "traditional" metal band weighs heavily on the singer, and in that regard Peck delivers. Additionally, the artwork and storybook/comic book layout are fantastic. My only criticism: for the average metal head, it's too long and some of the songs get repetitive. It would have been nice to see them focus more on a shorter version with their strongest songs. Nevertheless, these criticisms should not/will not dissuade die-hard metal fans—desperate for quality traditional metal—from devouring this metal feast. [Destroy All] Jonathan Swank

GLASS HAMMER

CULTURE OF ASCENT

How can you not appreciate a band that is heavily influenced by Yes, Genesis and Pink Floyd and posits a message rooted in a Christian worldview? Over the years, GH has created some of the most intricate and lush retro 70's, bass-driven, organ-riddled "lite" prog rock in the world. While they may keep a low profile—essentially doing this independently—big names like Jon Anderson (Yes) have taken notice. In fact, the talented Yes front-man collaborates with GH for the first time on this new conceptual work (including a cover of "South Side of the Sky" from Yes's *Fragile*) about the physical and spiritual journeys involved with mountain climbing. Ethereal male and female vocals, strings, acoustic drums and the occasional heavy guitar combine with Babb's patented bass work and Schendel's keyboard wizardry—which has a more modern sound than previous works. Wonderfully packaged in a digipak replete with fantastic artwork and photography, GH have once again delivered music and art that hearkens back to the most creative era in rock. [Arion Records] Jonathan Swank

AMARAN'S PLIGHT

VOICE IN THE LIGHT

This is a fantastic new prog rock/metal release produced by Gary Wehrkamp of Shadow Gallery. The band Amaran's Plight is DC Cooper on vocals, Gary Wehrkamp on guitars, keys, Nick D'Virgilio (Spock's Beard) on drums and Kurt Barabas (Under the Sun) on bass. Musically, this is top quality stuff, right up there with Neal Morse and Shadow Gallery. There is a good mix of hard and lighter stuff here, mostly melody driven, but with refined instrumental bursts typical of the genre. The story was written by John W. Crawford (Christian author and lyricist), and he helped DC and Gary with production as well. The story—based on a book with the same name by Crawford—is about how a near death experience changes a young man's life and how a message he receives at the time is dealt with throughout the remainder of his life. When he is diagnosed with cancer at a young age his beliefs are challenged further, but eventually, his conclusions about the "message in the light" bring him to saving faith and peace. Very deep and very thought provoking for believers and non-believers alike. This has got to be DC's best vocal performance to date—simply sublime. While one can't help but compare this to Shadow Gallery, fans of progressive metal and rock of any kind will really enjoy this. [ProgRock Records] Jonathan Swank

HILASTHERION

TAKEN FROM DARKNESS

This Finnish death metal release shares the flashy keyboard and guitar solos with the Finnish scene, but that seems to be about it. Hilastherion has taken the death metal part to heart, and show a level of brutality that is usually absent from the sub genre. While the pace does not vary much, there are some very well done breaks from the chaos. Well played metal, with bold lyrics. [Independent] Daniel Jesse

SOTAHUUTO

IHMISEN JALKI

Blending death metal with tinges of hardcore, Sotahuuto manages to stay fresh, and not a clone of other bands. Although the purists will not like the amount of breakdowns or all of the vocal styles used (there are a few!), Sotahuuto offers an "in-your-face" listen that will please. [Maanalainen] Daniel Jessie

SACRECY

S/T

Sacrecy offers up an album chock-full of progressive power metal. Complete with nice guitar solos, mid to fast paced song and piano interludes, this album hits all the mainstays of the genre. And of course, it offers a few ballads. My only complaint is the vocalist, whose voice seems too low for this style, yet it kind of sets them apart. [Independent] Daniel Jesse

ULTIMATUM

INTO THE PIT

As a survivor of the 80's to 90's Christian thrash era (although hopefully not the last) and an old school "metal as missions" proponent, Ultimatum's new full length *Into the Pit* has been highly anticipated. Comparisons to Exodus and older Metal Church are come by honestly, but the new album is worlds beyond Ultimatum's previous efforts, as the lucky few who purchased last year's "teaser"

Surf this: insideoutmusic.com, myspace.com/monotheistmetal, discerndeathmetal.com, escape-music.com, retroactiverecords.net

EP can attest. Singer Scott Waters' razor-tongued shrieks stick out in a world of hardcore screaming and death metal growls, but might best be described as a cross between Roger Martinez (thus his stint with Once Dead) and Accept's Udo. The album is full of some heavy riffing, with a sprinkling of fiery axework and memorable tunes, in spite of the formula tasting stale at a couple turns. Still, a giant step forward for these thrashers; well worth the price of admission. [Retroactive] Chris Gatto

TILES

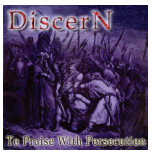
FLY PAPER

This seasoned Detroit act is all about clean, progressive and instrumental rock with witty and thought-provoking lyrics. With their 5th studio outing, fans will be pleasantly surprised to see a return to the more melody driven, song-oriented approach of their earlier works. After more than a decade of jamming and touring together, these guys have developed a confident and mature sound; singer Paul Rarick sounds just as vital and vibrant as he did more than a decade ago when the band released their upbeat and surprisingly fresh debut. Veteran producer Terry Brown (Rush) has once again helped to give these guys a pristine punch. Whether it's the quirky, modern-tinged "Landscrape" (pun intended) or the funky and singable "Hide & Seek," these guys scream enjoyable, high-quality rock. [InsideOut Music] Jonathan Swank

MONOTHEIST

UNFORSAKEN

Monotheist is the musical project of a person named "The Prophet." Whoever he is, he is a great musician. This album sort of mixes it up stylistically, going from brutal to progressive tech death to atmospheric with lots of odds and ends thrown in for your listening pleasure. One of the songs is quite a lot like Extol, but didn't sound like it was trying to imitate; instead it sounded like they were tipping their hat and saying thanks. There is so much good on this album it really is a shame it hasn't been mastered properly and released on a label with some good distribution. My copy actually had this annoying sound at the beginning of every song; reminded me of the sound a cassette deck made when you hit fast forward and play at the same time. That made listening to this at any substantial volume quite painful when a new song started. But really other than the mastering issue, this is a must have for the extreme music lover. [TTH] Michael Larson



DISCERN

TO PRAISE WITH PERSECUTION

Billy Fraser is back with the second installment in the Discern legacy. Picking up where *Revive and Rebuke* left off, this album has much to offer. I found some of the mixing of techniques quite pleasurable; blues meets brutality can be an enjoyable thing. Rick Hunter-Martinez handles the lead work on this disc and handle it he does. I found the lead playing supreme. There are a few weak moments on this, like the vocals being too guttural for the part, or the song being a touch clumsy feeling, but these moments are few and far between. Overall, this is a disc I am proud to own. [Independent] Michael Larson

MASS

CRACK OF DAWN

This kind of music is hard to market, simply because it's without gimmick. No complicated genre names, fancy haircuts or fashion-wear needed. It's just good melodic hard rock. Mass have been around since the 1980's and have enjoyed a somewhat legendary cult status, although they never achieved commercial success. Their chops haven't waned a bit, although their sound has updated slightly. Very enjoyable stuff here that makes you feel good while listening to it. Lyrically, the same ambiguity tends to cloud the band's stance that plagued them for better or worse in the 80's. Most of the songs deal with relationships, regret over poor decisions and lifestyle decisions, and the consequences involved. While all of these are worthy topics, the band doesn't offer the evangelical faith statement that some in the Christian metal scene might hope for. Having said that, it's likely that open-minded fans of 80's revivalist hard rock or melodic metal are set to enjoy *Crack of Dawn*. [Escape Music] Loyd Harp

ARMAGEDDON

THE MONEY MASK

18 years after its original release, Retroactive has come through for Christian metal fans once again with a collector's edition of Armageddon's only full-length album, *The Money Mask*. While each song has been digitally remastered, you also get a second disc of 13 demo tracks, including two songs that weren't on the original. Fans of Saint and Titanic will love the sound of Armageddon—straight-up heavy metal that fortunately stands the test of time. This album has been difficult to find for years, demanding high dollar on sites like eBay. If you don't already own, now is your chance to finally pick it up. [Retroactive] Chris Beck

MAIN LINE RIDERS

SHOT IN THE DARK

Main Line Riders are a new project, from the ashes of The Huntingtons, with a new album on Retroactive Records called *Shot in the Dark*. *Appetite for Destruction* meets The Ramones, which the music world has needed for some time. It hails to the glorious era in rock, when songs were fun and not so serious. The point was to make music that really rocked and that had a real attitude to it. There is a variety of modes on the CD, like some sassy upbeat raw-rock songs that still have their punk rock roots intact. "Here I Am" is a slow ballad that has a female backing vocal towards the end, which was random but still fit in the mix. There are a couple moments Cliffy walks out of his range vocally but it's close enough for this style of music. The last (and unlisted) song is a hidden treat – a cover of an old LA band called Junkyard. They do a fine version of this classic! Don't listen to this for polished production or catchy commercial lyrics … just turn it up, sing-a-long and play air guitar. If you were ever a fan of anything ever found on Man's Ruin Records, War Rocket Ajax or Kix, this is right up your alley! [Retroactive] Drue Mitchell/Jeff Collins

AN ALBUM REVIEW RE-VISITED

Reviewer Chad Olson + Artist Scott Waters Remember...

WAY BACK IN THE OLDEN DAYS ... BACK WHEN EVERY OTHER MONTH OR SO WE WERE STILL HEARING ABOUT HOW HM MAGAZINE HAD "TURNED ITS BACK ON METAL" AND BETRAYED A SCENE, THERE LIVED A NEWLY HIRED EMPLOYEE NAMED CHAD OLSON. CHAD WANTED TO ADD TO HIS MAILING LIST DUTIES WRITING. TO START HIM OFF, I GAVE HIM THE THEN NEWLY-RELEASED *PUPPET OF DESTRUCTION* ALBUM BY ULTIMATUM. "LOOK AT THIS," I SHOWED HIM ANOTHER ALBUM WITH A SIMILAR COVER. "YOU SHOULD BRING THAT UP IN THE REVIEW." WHEN THAT REVIEW WAS PRINTED, IT DIDN'T GO OVER TOO WELL. IT'S HARD TO FORGET EXPERIENCES LIKE THAT AND, SINCE I'M FRIENDS WITH BOTH THE AFORE-MENTIONED WRITER AND ARTIST, I THOUGHT IT'D BE FUN IF WE TOOK A TRIP DOWN MEMORY ~~PAIN~~, ER, UH, LANE...

SCOTT WATERS FIRES BACK

I joined Ultimatum in January of 1993 and we played our first show opening for Godfear and Extraction at a festival called Sonshine '93. Our first demo tape was released in '93. In 1994, we began work on ten new demo tracks that we eventually released on a cassette titled *Symphonic Extremities* by Ultimatum. The tape sold well and most of the reviews were favorable, while others offered critical comments that forced me to work harder on our next release. We even received a favorable review in Heaven's Metal. Eventually, the album was picked up by a small independent label called Juke Box Media. They put the demo out on CD, without any re-recording, remixing or mastering. While this sold well for us, we all knew the production wasn't where it needed to be. In 1995, we opened up a show for the Jesus Freaks and Mortification. Steve Rowe from Mortification seemed genuinely impressed by our show and even purchased one of our t-shirts and a bunch of our *Symphonic* tapes to take on the road with him. He also asked us to send him a new song for one of his Rowe Productions compilations. We recorded the song "World of Sin," which was the song later remixed for the CD version of *Symphonic Extremities*.

In 1996 we began work on our second CD, *Puppet of Destruction*, and I designed the cover art. After hearing the first song recorded for the CD, "Never," Steve Rowe called and offered to sign us to his label, Rowe Productions, as well as have the CD distributed by Diamante Music Group. This seemed like the company to be with at the time. We labored hard on that album and were happy with the production, despite it still being a no-budget recording. We sent the DAT tapes off to Australia to be mastered. When the final product was delivered into our hands, I must confess we were all a bit disappointed in the mastering as we felt the bottom end had been lost. However, we were still very proud of this album. We felt it had some of our best songs and certainly some of our best guitar work. I was also much happier with my vocal performance on this album.

Much like *Symphonic*, *Puppet of Destruction* was getting good reviews and some constructive criticism in various metal magazines. However, the magazine we were looking forward to seeing the most was Heaven's Metal. Having been a Christian metal fan since the 80's, I was also a fan of the magazine and trusted the reviews. I myself had purchased many albums based on the reviews in HM. Before the issue with our review even arrived at our door, I got a call from a very disturbed Steve

Rowe who was completely blindsided and upset by the review of our CD. When I read the review for myself, I must confess, I was beyond upset. The review by Chad Olson not only trashed much of the music on the CD, but he point blank accused me of plagiarism of the cover art. This upset me the most. On the inside of the cover, we had decided to use x-rays of the band members instead of photos. Our drummer at the time was an x-ray tech and it was his idea. We actually had a blast doing those and thought it was a cool idea. Chad accused us of copying some Offspring album. None of us were remotely Offspring fans, and this was before I was on the internet, so I went to a local store and purchased a copy of the Offspring CD. Even seeing the album with my own eyes, I still couldn't see how we could be accused of copying Offspring. Indeed, their cover had a skull, but it wasn't an x-ray and didn't resemble our photos even slightly. What was worse was the comment that I stole the cover idea from the recently released Bruce Dickinson album *Accident of Birth*. What really tweaked me about this comment wasn't so much that Chad had made it, but that my friend Doug Van Pelt, who was editor of the magazine, allowed it to print knowing full well that our cover had been designed at least a year before the Bruce album came out. I remembered showing Doug our new shirt at the *Texas Rockfest* the year before the review was written. That doesn't even take into account that the two covers really look nothing alike. I must confess, there was an eerie resemblance to the way the tracks were laid out on the back of our CD to g//z/r, which Chad also pointed out in his review. However, this was mere coincidence since at the time I was mostly listening to Christian music and wasn't even aware of g//z/r.

Chad also seemed to think that even our music was ripped off from other bands, which was just not the case whatsoever. Of course, this was ten years ago now so I can't recall all that was said, but I do remember being compared to Iron Maiden and Sacred Warrior, which just isn't an accurate description at all. All the secular metal magazines that were reviewing us were giving us fair to very good reviews and most were comparing our style to that of Exodus, Overkill and Megadeth. Indeed, that was a more accurate view in our eyes. We were certainly fans of Sacred Warrior, but we were in no way trying to sound like either of those bands and I didn't think it was a fair comparison. I felt we had released our best CD yet. Steve Rowe also assured us that he thought it was a quality metal release and was one of his all time favorite albums, yet he also felt this review would really stifle sales of the CD. The whole band was upset by the review, but I took it personally; I can't even express how crushed and mad I was about the review and the accusations of plagiarism on the artwork. We even started getting letters from fans that were upset by the review and started seeing the HM review pop up in other magazines reviews. I remember one magazine called Wreathe of Thorns started their review of *Puppet of Destruction* with a reference to the controversy started by "the review."

CHAD OLSON RESPONDS

Have you ever tried crow? Thankfully, I haven't had to eat much of it throughout my life. But right now, I'm gorging myself on that black bird like it's Thanksgiving and turkeys are extinct! Wow. I think about this album review from time to time, but I hadn't read it in years. And of course, I hadn't seen or heard *Puppet Of Destruction* since I wrote the review. I reviewed the *Up From the Ashes* DVD for 1340mag.com a couple of months ago, and I really started to wonder if I had totally missed the boat on Ultimatum. The band sounds great on that DVD, and I gave them a positive nod. So in listening to this record and reading the review now, I can't believe I ever wrote that scathing diatribe oh so long ago.

Here's the deal. I grew up on a farm in rural Iowa. On a whim, I applied for a job at HM Magazine, got the job, and moved my wife and me to the wonderful city of Austin, Texas. Being a longtime Christian metal fan, this was like a dream come true. Calling Tourniquet drummer Ted Kirkpatrick at his home just to catch up, Michael Sweet of Stryper calling about ad specs to push his *Truth* demo, Doug Pinnick (King's X) calling to check in with our office for kicks… The list goes on. If you followed this scene, it was surreal. I was the Subscription Manager/Mail Order & Merchandise Director, but Doug let me write occasionally, and it was all too much fun!

So my first assignment was Mortification's *Triumph Of Mercy*. I wasn't so kind to that album either, but Steve Rowe and I got along well when he stayed with Doug a few months later despite what I had written. My next assignment was the Ultimatum album. Doug told me to listen to Iron Maiden and Sacred Warrior for a reference point, so this is all ultimately his fault (kidding, Doug!). After listening to *Puppet Of Destruction* now, I'm not sure if I ever took Doug's suggestion. I do remember going to the shelf and pulling some of those albums out. I was never a Maiden fan, but I'd heard a few Sacred Warrior songs. But looking back, I have no idea how I compared this to anything but Exodus, Overkill, or maybe early Megadeth! I either didn't listen to the Maiden and Sacred Warrior albums at that time, or I certainly didn't understand the art of musical comparison in rock journalism at the age of 23. And it was derogatory to say Scott's vocals sounded "like someone running their fingers down a chalkboard," when I could have merely said he sounds a lot like Steve Souza. As for the comparison of the opening riff on "Crosshope" to Mortification's "Dark Allusions," the only connections I can make today are the timing of the intro and the dissonant guitar chords. And taking potshots at the lyrical subject matter was a bit uncalled for, as well.

For whatever reason, the cover art immediately reminded me of Bruce Dickinson's *Accident Of Birth*. In retrospect, the only things in common are the jesters. Heck, Ultimatum's dude has a skull instead of a regular face, and he has scissors instead of a weapon! What was my deal?! As for The Offspring comparison, I was probably reaching with that one. I swear I wasn't drinking when I wrote this review 9 1/2 years ago. I stick by the assertion that the track layout on the back is very similar to that g//z/r album, but again, Scott says it's a coincidence. Not sure why I felt he was plagiarizing, but if I was being that nitpicky today, I'd contact the artist first to get their take. We humans sure do mature a lot over time, eh?

I had no idea other magazines referred to my assessment as "the review." Wow. Life lesson: the pen is truly mightier than the sword. This is a perfect example of that lil' pointer. Scott and I emailed each other about a year later, and while he was still hurt by it, there was a little bit of resolution if I remember right. I know that Doug always stood by me as a writer, which is something he still does with his staff to this day. He may not agree with them—and he may let the world know—but he doesn't edit something simply because he disagrees with it. Believe me, in the world of journalism, that doesn't happen all the time.

I want to close by saying this review seems like it was written by someone else long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away. If you've continued to read my contributions to HM over the years, hopefully you'll agree that my writing, tact, accuracy, and professionalism have come a long way. I know it won't take away lost album sales, hurt feelings, and bruised artistic anticipation, but I'll close with an apology to Scott Waters, Robert Gutierrez, Steve Trujillo, Sean Griego, and Steve Rowe.

HEAVENS METAL

Robert doesn't exactly have full creative control over the drum sound for Stryper albums. Bill and I told Robert from the very beginning that there are "no rules" when recording drums for us (that is the rule). He has a tremendous gift, and we urged him to let his immense musical imagination go free and see what happens. Our approach is a lot different than recording with Stryper, and it was easy to see Robert relishing the opportunity to just let loose. We started off with "Rated X," and just like normal, Robert was learning the songs, practicing, and recording all at the same time. Yet, this track is being transformed more than any other track we'd recorded thus far. He breaks out strange time signatures that are breath-taking, and has a signature back beat that I have no idea how he can pull off … but he does! By this time, I am starting to get an ear for drumming. The second song of the day is "Baptized in Blood." The song is really fast and aggressive, super technical, with very fast riffing. It almost has an Overkill feel to it. While Robert continues his warm ups, I ask the guys about something I had been thinking about for a while: what did they think of me asking Robert to record a drum solo that we could place on the reissue of *Beyond Hell's Gate*? I was thinking Robert could easily pull off a drum solo worthy of its own track. Cliffy and Rob thought it was a great idea.

After breaking for more essential Vegas Thai food, we headed back into the studio to record drums for "Close To Deliverance." Bill told us that during the original recording of that song back in the 80's he had told Keith Miles (the vocalist) to growl like a cookie monster, just for fun. So, the track starts out with Keith growling, "Growl, growl." It's really funny if you know what's coming! As Robert is recording, Bill comments, "It's amazing how you never have any idea what direction Robert is going to go with any song. It's so unpredictable and amazing." This is high praise coming from someone who has heard Robert record drums on five albums in just two months!

DAY 4

By this time, Rob is headed back home to Texas. Cliffy and I are preparing to have brunch with Bill and his wife, Maria Teresa at Putters when Cliffy drops another great quote on us. It was the utter sincerity in his voice that made it so hilarious when he said, "Kristi and I have the two most beautiful wiener dogs in the world!" This had us laughing a long time, which was a good thing since it took us forever to get to order. Bill was gracious enough to let Cliffy and me crash at his house the night before. The three of us had stayed up talking until Bill dragged himself to bed at almost 2:30am. Cliffy and I talked music and life non-stop until I literally fell asleep in the middle of one of his sentences around 4:30am.

After brunch, we all went back to Bill's studio and he broke out some of the early versions of songs from the next The Seventh Power release (titled *Dominion & Power*). Keep in mind, there were no vocals or guitar solos—these tracks only had bass, rhythm guitar, and Robert's brilliant drum sound at this point. Although I had talked to Bill about the album, this was the first time my ears were to hear new music from what I know will become another elite heavy metal release on Retroactive Records. Even in demo status, I was blown away. The sound was HUGE! It was progressive, creative and doomy. Robert absolutely destroyed on drums. Bill decided to treat us to some of the tracks from the first two Titanic albums that already had Robert's re-recorded drums on them. Robert's drumming on "Freakshow" was so radical that it almost sounded like a drum solo in a song. When Cliffy heard "Screaming in Silence" for the first time ever, he couldn't get over what a "monster" metal sound it had. Robert's drumming on "Web Dreams" is a clinic on the importance of dynamics, and it clearly shows why Robert is one of the best drummers on the planet.

With only one hour before I need to be at the airport to begin my journey home, Bill breaks out an old Holy Right cassette and we all have a good laugh. We cringe at the horrid studio mix, off key harmonies, and complete lack of unity from the entire band on this mid 80's metal release. It's amazing that the lead singer (Keith Miles) would go on to sing on one Final Axe and two Titanic albums that have already become classics in the genre. Christian metal has come a long way since then.

LOOKING BACK

Our trip to Vegas can't be defined as a "trip." It was truly a four day experience of constant laughter and musical brilliance. Every day was filled with surreal and amazing moments shared between five people who left their time together in Vegas as brothers.

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

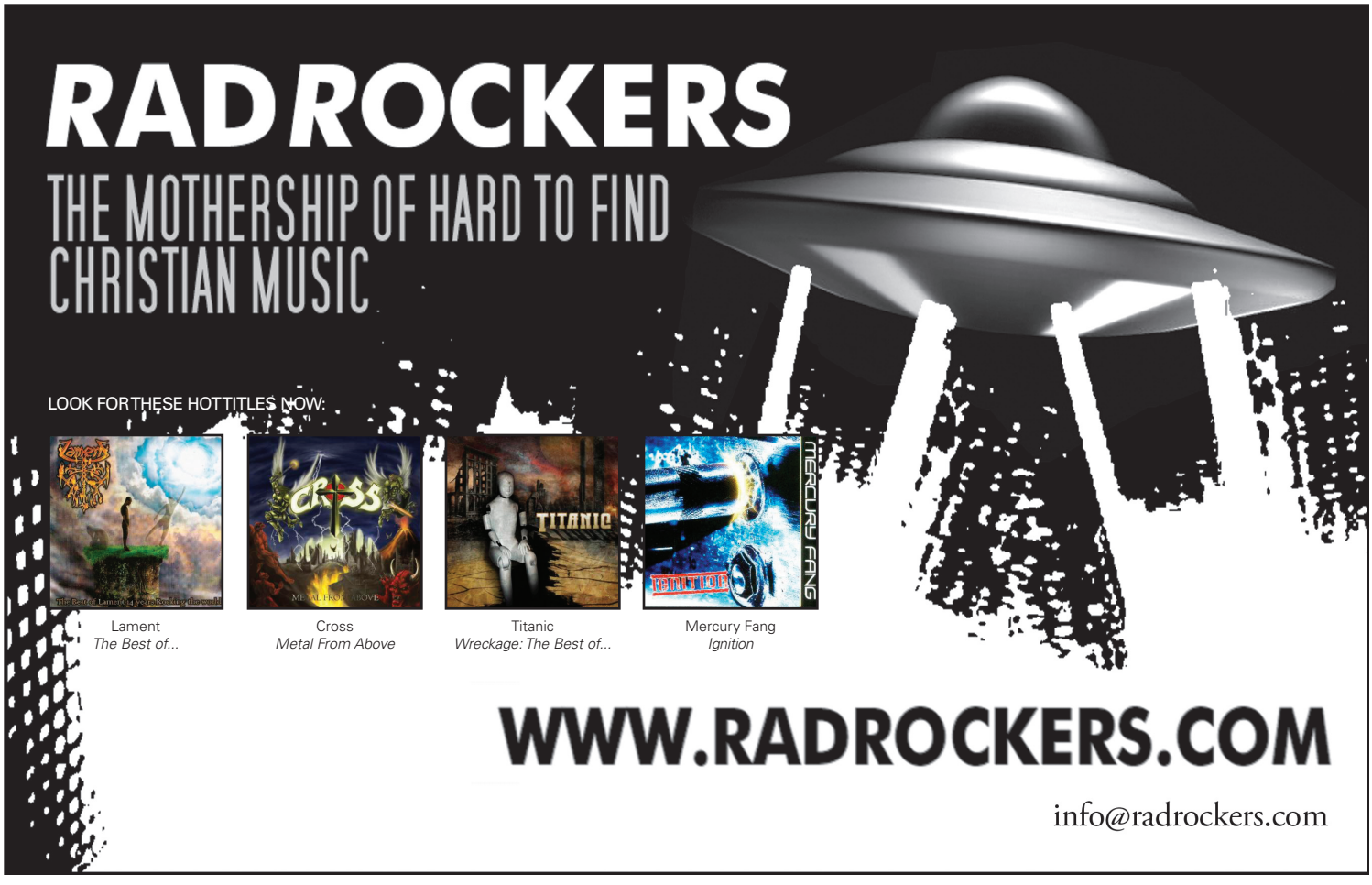
LONELINESS

I am writing this column on December 23rd 2007. Christmas is a joyous time for most people: time to celebrate Jesus' birthday, special church Nativity events, Christmas dinner with family, love, laughter, Christmas trees and gifts. But for many in the world, Christmas is a terribly lonely time. There are even many people in the church who celebrate Christmas for the right reason but have no immediate family to share it with. Imagine Christmas without Jesus in your life, church family or any immediate family at all. Christmas is a sad time for many.

The community in my area has a Christmas lunch for hundreds of people who have no family at Christmas. It is now so big they have 2 locations. Last year I was involved as a table host making sure all the people got their delicious full Christmas dinners, drinks and gifts. My wife Kate coordinated the volunteers last year and this and our son Leighton was a waiter last year. What an amazing gift to give to lonely people and poorer families in this community.

You may find this strange, but I often feel lonely. I do spend a fair amount of time alone because I work from home. Being a "people person" and keen talker, I often really dislike being alone. But in all this I always remember that Jesus is my friend who sticks closer than a brother. When I feel lonely I know that I can chat with my Lord at any time and He is there.

Are you lonely? Do you know anyone who is lonely? I love this following saying: "If you want a friend, go make a friend." This is hard for many because they are shy. But if you visit your local church I am sure if they are real that you will find a friend there. Even if this fails, never blame God. It is not His fault that humans are often caught in their own little worlds. So I encourage you all to look out for someone who needs a friend and always remember that Jesus is your Eternal friend.



PASTOR BOB'S INTERNATIONAL REPORT

By Pastor Bob

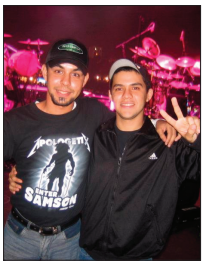
I have just returned from a tour of Wales, England and Norway. I began my tour speaking in Swansea and Neath, Wales. What a great group of people. There are some really exciting things going on in this part of the world. I spoke in a Christian biker's pub with a bunch of VERY cool guys who really love the Lord. Most of them came out of a pretty rough past and are serving the Lord now ... on their Harleys. What a way to go! I also spoke at a rock & roll pub. It was booked as a "question and answers" night. Many local rockers came with their questions and were very open to the Gospel message. I then traveled to Birmingham, where I spoke once again at the **Meltdown Conference**. I have been there many years now and it is always a delight. We had some great bands playing as well. **Jeff Scheetz** was with me once again, and amazing on the guitar as always! My next stop was London, where I spent some great time with the gang from **The Glorious Undead Church** there. They are going through a lot of changes, with some exciting times ahead. From there, I traveled to Oslo, where I spoke at **Nordic Fest** once again. What fun! **Barren Cross** and **Once Dead** joined me from the USA and **Mortification** joined us from Australia. I finished the weekend by preaching at **SubChurch** there in Oslo. It has been a great year. I spoke at 17 festivals during 2007 and next year looks even busier! Why don't you join me for a festival in 2008? I want to remind you that you can hear my **weekly podcast** from the festivals at: [*sanctuaryinternational.com*]

No. Ireland, Venezuela, Columbia & metal

Philip Lowry, Luis Enrique Pozo & Christian Gonzalez

Philip Lowry, Sanctuary NI.
–Lisbum, N. Ireland

Sanctuary NI started about a year ago. Stevie K had a vision to start this ministry within Northern Ireland as there was no real Christian hard music scene. After much prayer, Sanctuary NI was blessed with 7 leaders, all from different churches and professional backgrounds. We meet every Tuesday night upstairs at a local music shop. We have around 20-30 kids in attendance. The evening is split into 3 basic parts. The first part, "The Power Hour," is where I would play Christian hard music (sorta like a DJ). I then talk with the kids and try to get a feel of what they are listening to and give them a Christian alternative. The "The Jamming Hour" is up next. This is where the kids will plug in their guitars and jam. We also give them as much technical advice where possible to better their playing. The last section of the evening is "The Positive Teaching Hour." During this time together we bring along a guest speaker with knowledge of musical ministry who gives a short but positive sermon. The evening comes to an end watching positive videos and fellowship with each other. The leaders also provide as much encouragement as possible to the kids. We feel God has big plans for this ministry. Many plans have been made and many doors have been opened unto us. God bless!
[myspace.com/sanctuaryni]



Luis Enrique Pozo
–Barquisimeto, Lara Venezuela

Here at DESPERTAR 100.5FM we know that the Lord has gifted us with the ability to speak to a generation that understands messages brought forth through music. We are dedicated to "spread the message" which is: preaching Christ and the truth of the Bible without sugar coating it, but taking it for what it really is; representing Christ as the true Son of God; and getting the message of hope to this lost generation. We seek to glorify the Lord through this ability He has given us and keep ourselves humble.

Our daily programming speaks truth to what is going on in this present day world, present the Gospel, and tell what we came out of. Beats with lyrics are a powerful combo and we seek to use this to get the message of Christ across, solely for His glory and for people to come to the knowledge of the saving grace the Lord has for them. Hope you can have a blessed day everyday of your life!
[myspace.com/therealmessenjah]

Christian Gonzalez, Pantokrator Community –Columbia

We began June 29, 2003 in order to reach all those who are involved inside rock music and all its genre, through this way, to accomplish with the Bible's commandment made in Mathew 28:19. Through this time we've made events in bars, parks and some indoor events with bands like Ishi, Mentor, Dark Soul, Antidemon, among others. All this is outside of the church, because we are sure that it's outside where the Christian church should be working; and in this way we can reach the people who really need God and to find the true path for their lives. We are part of the "Asociación Iglesia Esmirna" (Esmirna Church Association) headed by Pastor Yeison Jimenez. With distorted guitars and with the aggressiveness of the Gospel, we count around 60 members and with 8 strong based leaders to form new members. We want to send a special greeting to every reader of this important magazine and to wish God's blessings in all things. We encourage you to keep fighting for what God has promised to you, because God never lets you fall while others oppose these promises.
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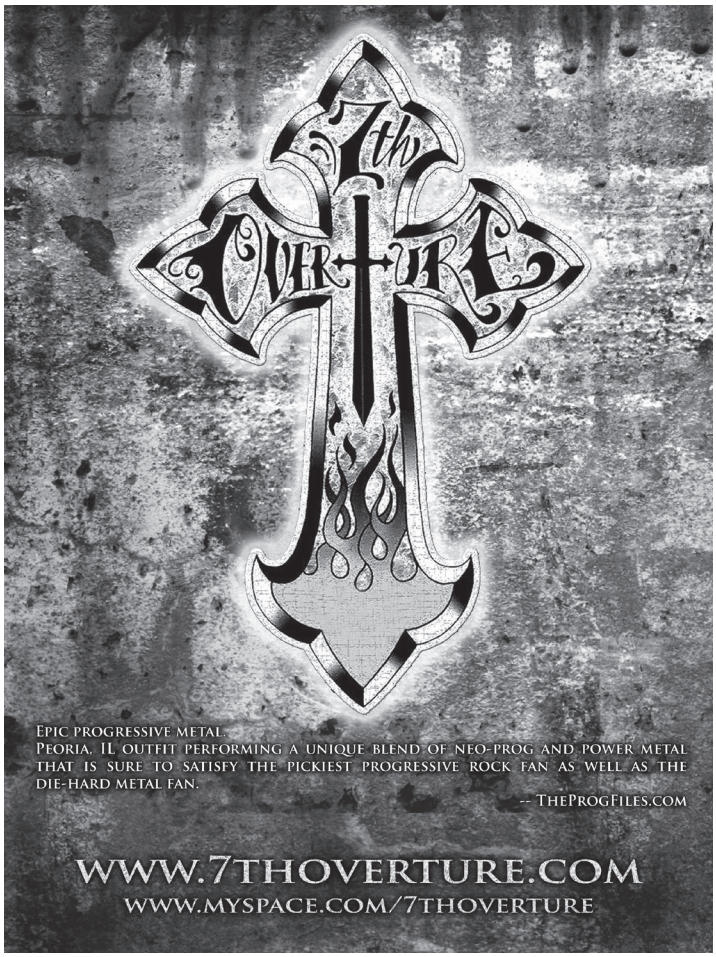

Reflections of a metal "head" Flowing from a contrite heart

By Jonathan Swank

There are two legitimate ways to share our faith with others: either we quote straight from the Bible, allowing the Word itself to "prick" the listener's heart through the power of the Spirit; or we meet people where they are in life and let the Word shine through our actions—towards them and others—and not always from our tongues, which are often judgmental and demanding. It is sad to me that so many believers don't recognize the importance and the legitimacy of both these means of grace. Furthermore, and more importantly, we don't often realize that without proper follow-up discipleship and encouragement, even our most earnest initial efforts may bear no fruit.

Likewise, I believe God works both through those Christians who are involved with "evangelical" metal and through those believers who are "planted" in secular bands. I believe that both ways present unique challenges, temptations and both are equally hazardous. Standing up for what you believe in and overtly stating your beliefs to your listeners is not safe, by any means; neither is working in the trenches of the world, outside the comforts and confines of mainstream Christianity. Why can't we as believers in Christ stop criticizing our brothers and sisters just because they don't see things "our" way? Wouldn't it be better to pray that God would be glorified through their work, instead of always challenging the legitimacy of their endeavors? Let God be the judge of their hearts and their actions.

We are all tempted to carve out our own safe niche in life, whether that is in a Christian metal scene, a church group or amongst a group of friends. Those things are all good, but we all know there are much more important issues to be concerned with … like how we treat those that are struggling/suffering around us every day or how we use the gifts that God has bestowed upon us in a way that is sincere—from the heart—and not "pressured" upon us by the culture of religion.

One thing is certain in life: all of us—no matter how faithful, hardworking or well-meaning we are in carrying out our daily responsibilities/ministries—will endure hardship or suffering at some point in life. Experience tells me this usually comes when we least expect it, and often when we may be most harshly judging others or praising ourselves. Wouldn't it be better to pray for a brother instead of trashing him in front of others or talking about him behind his back? Therefore, "I exhort you brethren," to pray this prayer with me:

Lord, when I don't understand or I don't agree with another believer's choices or actions, help me to pray for him from my heart rather than condemn and curse him with my tongue. Lord, I pray that I will treat others the way I would want to be treated—the way Christ would treat me—with humility, grace and compassion. **Amen.**